

THE ONLYX INFORMER

BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES



~~"Rude"~~



~~"Thug"~~



~~"Lazy"~~



~~"Loose"~~

PLUS

- MY "GHETTO" STORY
- THE LEGACY OF JOHN D. O'BRYANT
- THE END OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH?

THE ONYX INFORMER

FEB. 08

The ONYX Informer exists to be a voice for the people of the African Diaspora and the greater Boston community in which we reside. The ONYX embraces the unity and values of diversity in both the content of our publication and in the membership of our organization.

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Wisdom for the Ages

**Stereotypes are devices for
saving a biased person the
trouble of learning.**

~Anonymous



When I sat down to write my letter for this issue, I was set on using the quote above from the anonymous source. I was ready; in fact, I was 100 percent gung-ho to express my thoughts on how many of us have probably been the subject of stereotypes and those who aren't are said to be "acting against the norm."

But then I found another quote by film director David Cronenberg. He said, "All stereotypes turn out to be true. This is a horrifying thing about life. All those things you fought against as a youth: you begin to realize they're stereotypes because they're true." I was taken aback by Cronenberg's words. All I could think was how his opinion is so drastically different from my own. Could he be right? Could the stereotypes we perpetuate as a society be the result of fact and not of ignorance?

But, I think Cronenberg and I need to talk. It's too easy to say all stereotypes are true. If they were, we'd no doubt be a group of robots separated only by race and nationality. The truth is, we use stereotypes as a crutch, an excuse not to get to know someone and possibly prove our assumptions wrong. Saying that all Black people are ghetto or all White people are stuck up is one thing. Believing these are blanket statements for both races is another. And

if people like Cronenberg actually trust that sweeping claims like these are never false, then not only are they being controlled by their stubborn ignorance, but we must do greater work to combat these falsehoods.

Just think about it. Have you ever put someone in a "box" by assuming who they were just by how they looked? Have you ever been irritated because people placed a label on you? That is what stereotypes are all about. And when a person doesn't fit the stereotype, there always has to be an explanation. Case in point: I'm Black, I speak in full sentences, and I love indie films and alternative rock. But instead of people just seeing me for me, I'm told I "act White" and have been called everything from an Oreo to a Coconut (brown on the outside, white on the inside).

For this issue, the Onyx took an effort to break down common stereotypes people of color face every day and to examine the impact these perceptions have in our communities. I can only hope this piece helps, in some way, to remove these views from those who have them and encourage you all to get to know someone before you judge them.

We're also celebrating Black History Month in this issue with a plethora of interesting and potentially controversial topics, including a special piece on Northeastern's own John D. O'Bryant, a discussion of the portrayal of Black vs. White organized crime, and our Round Table on the state of Black History Month today. As usual, we hope the Onyx gets you talking. The staff and I hope that you all will continue to share your feedback with us.

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Paving a Path for Others

For those that missed the John D. O'Bryant African American Institute's (JDOAAI) annual Kwanzaa celebration this past December, you missed a great deal. You missed out not only on some finger-licking-good jerk and fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, steamed cabbage with carrots, cornbread and bread pudding, but you missed out on a piece of advice that a co-op or academic advisor would never offer you.

The advice, offered by Sister Verdaya Mitchell Brown, former librarian at the JDOAAI and an advocate for Blacks in Boston, including at Northeastern, called for all Black students to continue the tradition of paving the path for others as it has been for us.

In doing this, Sister Verdaya believes we take part not only in practicing the principles of Kwanzaa but continuing the legacy of our ancestors by working to elevate the status of Blacks every where.

This step may seem unfeasible, especially for the graduating class, as Sallie Mae and other loan providers start to send your loan bills. But it's achievable at no cost.

Sister Verdaya said something as simple as a smile to a fellow brother or sister on the T is a start and a conversation encouraging someone to go to college is the next step.

Looking back at the history of the Onyx, I discovered this was the exact principle the magazine, then a newspaper, was founded on. The Onyx has paved a path where African American students, and all students of color, can have a voice on campus.

Thirty five years ago, Northeastern was a different campus and African American students were trying to survive in the wake of the 1960s. Ted Thomas, one of the founders of the Onyx, believed a student publication should document their experiences and give them a voice. But only through a newspaper they could call their own was that possible.

Thus, we have to reach out to others as others have reached out to us. We have to pave a path for others as others have paved a path for us. If you volunteer, keep it up. If you are involved on campus, keep it up; and if you're not, make this your New Year's resolution.

Paving a path for others is a way of giving back to the community. Our generation has a lot to be thankful for and much is due to the hard work of those who came before us. It is our responsibility to do the same for others after us.

Margaret Kamara

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ONYX

Attention Minority Student Groups:

Want your event in the Onyx calendar? Please send event listings to onyxinformer@yahoo.com. Type: "Event for Onyx Calendar" in the subject line. We are now accepting events for March-April!

Comments, suggestions?

If you have any comments, critiques, topic ideas or suggestions please let us know! We want to hear from you.

Please email us at onyxinformer@yahoo.com or editorinchiefonyx@yahoo.com.

Attention Poets, Artists, and Literary Writers:

Submit your pieces to our SoulSpeech section! Get published! Send your pieces to onyxeditor@yahoo.com. Type "SoulSpeech submission" in the subject line. We are now accepting pieces for our March-April Issue.

In Our Next Issue:

The AAI in Review-What's going on after a big year of change.

ONYX On The Web:

Visit our new website at www.onyx.neu.edu

MOVIES

Gangsta Lovin'

BY JORDAN MARTINS

American entertainment has a love affair with organized crime and the whole gangster persona. From the *Godfather* to the *Sopranos* the appeal of a crime family dodging the law to form lucrative empires really resonates with the American people.

In the film *American Gangster*, Denzel Washington depicts notorious drug lord Frank Lucas. *American Gangster* takes a more in depth look than the typical gangster film genre and shows the repercussions of Lucas'

actions. The film shows heroin addicts overdosing and one scene in particular features a woman nodding into a heroin high as her baby cries by her side. And even though the film depicts violence with brutal shootings and a man being burned alive, it doesn't feature as much violence as other gangster movies have in the past.

The idea of the gangster, his lifestyle, and the code he lives by have been romanticized by Hollywood. The (usually) Italian or Irish mobsters portrayed in the movies are seen as cool and heroic and are, in a twisted way, legendary. They are presented as classy men of honor with luxurious taste. The representation of the White crime lord is one of a complex champion who is hard to hate.

Unfortunately Black men in gangster movies have not been afforded this liberty. Maybe because most Black men are commonly typecast as thugs and characters that don't possess a range of qualities or depth of character, they are not deeply examined when they play these roles and are summed up as cold hearted criminals.

This is a dangerous double standard in place. The White crime lord is seen as reaching for the American Dream. He is bringing his family away from poverty and

the audience is proud when he beats the odds and achieves affluence through "the family business." Although the image perpetuated creates stereotypes and can be damaging to Italian and Irish Americans, the overall moral fiber of the entire community is not questioned. When a Black man commits a crime, critics say it's the result of African Americans naturally being immoral. These negative perceptions of the Black man still remain strong even though they were created centuries ago.

Granted most of the Italians and Irish immigrants portrayed in these films are born into "the life," but they have other options for advancement outside of organized crime. No viewer seeks to blame the individual because they believe it is just how things are and that the guy on screen is just doing his part in the "family business." Rationalizing factors are not in the equation when looking at the African American criminal; people have a negative perception of the race and see their communities as having decayed morals and values. People are more likely to overlook the fact that an African American's chance for progress has been stunted for years by both overt and institutionalized racism.

There is a lot of controversy surrounding *American Gangster* but until we hold our heralded gangster epics of the past to the same scrutiny and standards this film is being held to, I suggest America reassess their gripe for the Black man and organized crime.



SCENES FROM AMERICAN GANGSTER

MUSIC

80s Baby Brings 70s Soul

BY JORDAN MARTINS

Being the wise businessman he is, Jay-Z capitalized on the release of the film *American Gangster* by releasing his new album with the same name. But he proves to be more than an opportunist by delivering one of the best releases of 2007.

Inspired by a blend of his material on a Tapemasters, Inc. mixtape and the Frank Lucas based film, he created a concept album of sorts, with a loose relationship with the movie. Themes from the film are weaved throughout his lyrical narratives, which detail the rise of a hustler through the pinnacle of his success and ending with his eventual decline.

The album captures the vibe of the film with sound clips and 70s era soul samples. The majority of the productions come from Diddy's reunited crew, The Hitmen. Other contributors include The Neptunes, No I.D., DJ Toomp and Jermaine Dupri who all abandoned their usual styles to help create a retro soundscape.

The album's introduction has two narrators running through the ins and outs of gangster mentality while exposing the misconceptions. A bar goes, "Your gangster is not defined by how low your jeans fall by your waist/ but more how your genes stand over his expectations."

The moment the first verse drops, it's evident rhyming about the block rather than the boardroom has definitely rejuvenated Jay's flow, as he's sharp and focused. In "Pray," "American Dream-in" and "No Hook," Jay nimbly breaks down the pressures of the inner city

and the nearly inevitable path of becoming a career criminal.

The album picks up with more upbeat productions, ranging from fast and energized to slow and silky smooth, on the feel good tracks like "Roc Boys," "Sweet," "I Know" and "Party Life." Although these songs have a more celebratory feel to them, Jay's strong lyrical content and introspective observations never slip. The Neptunes' produced track, "I Know," has an undeniably catchy hook but can simultaneously be interpreted as heroin addiction, a relationship, or Jay's connection to the rap game.

Former foe, Nas, appears on "Success" and sheds light on the sense of boredom and frustration of life at the top. "Fallin'" explores the inevitable repercussions of making fast money.

Hov leaves us with very little to complain about on this album. He returns in tiptop shape and delivers one of his strongest offerings to date. He brings the maturity and wisdom of a veteran by shaking off the lyrical dust that was on his last album, *Kingdom Come*. He no longer sounds too old and discusses topics his true fans can understand.

Although the content of *American Gangster* may be reminiscent of *Reasonable Doubt*, his monumental success will not allow him to return to the mind-



AMERICAN GANGSTER ALBUM COVER

set of his classic debut. But with his experimentation with the most intricate rhyme pattern he's tried in years, there's no doubt fans of the old Hov will be "Feelin' It."

MUSIC

Nas's Upcoming Album

BY IVELISSE SANCHEZ

Shhhhhhh! You can't say it! According to a lot of people, you simply shouldn't. It's a word that hasn't lost its venom since the White man started it. But over the decades it has taken on a double life and epitomizes the concept of a double standard. Uttering the word can invoke a major beat down as easily as it can initiate a greeting. The argument over its usage has been around for years and the controversy always falls in the same categories: Nigga vs. Nigger; Black vs. White; Hateful vs. Endearing.

But in true iconic style, Nas's 2008 album, *Nigger*, is a big F--- You! to all the people and organizations who participated in a mock funeral for the

matter, I have to give him props for trying to defend himself. Whether you buy into his theory or not, one fact will remain true; whether people say it in public or in private, nigger was and still is a part of millions of peoples' vocabulary, and always will be.

Nuri Chandler-Smith, a lecturer at Northeastern and a hip-hop scholar and lover, says she can see both sides of the argument. The real issue, she says, isn't necessarily the word but a lack of communication between the generations.

"I don't think the debate will ever end," she said. "This generation has been desensitized to it whereas people of older generations will never change.



PHOTO BY ERIC BAUMANN

NIGGER

N-word. To add another exclamation point to the phrase, he changed the release date from December 2007 to February 2008 to coincide with Black History Month.

Nas's defense is simple- he's just trying to take power from the word. During an interview with MTV News, Nas said, "I wanna make the word easy on muthaf--kas' ears. You see how White boys ain't mad at 'cracker' 'cause it don't have the same [sting] as 'nigger'? ... I want 'nigger' to have less meaning than 'cracker.'"

Regardless of his ability to be grammatically, or politically, correct for that

It comes down to different experiences... Younger generations just don't have the same context with the word and so it doesn't carry the same meaning. But we have to understand it's depressing for older generations to see all their struggles for our freedoms and [when the word is used] it's all for nothing."

Nas has been in the game for quite some time. Since his critically acclaimed debut album *Illmatic* (1994), Nas has released eight albums. *Nigger* will be his tenth. His 2006 release, *Hip Hop is Dead*, also generated a lot of controversy but Nas has never been a dumb artist. So is his defense for *Nigger* believable or

is it a marketing ploy to keep him relevant in a music industry where people don't want to discuss politics, racism or all the other -isms that exist?

Chandler-Smith can't help but contemplate this as well.

"If he has this theory that he's going to desensitize the word maybe him bringing it up again will allow the older generations to see where the younger generation is coming from," she said. "But his marketing team probably has another objective. People are going to buy the album because it's controversial and more money means more albums."

Breaking Down

ster•e•o•types

1 on interracial relationships

by: melanie araujo

These days interracial couples are becoming more noticeable than ever before. Whether it's at the movies, in the mall, at sporting events, or at church, interracial couples are everywhere and are dealing with the additional stress of dating outside their race.

Stereotypes associated with interracial dating have often been depicted in the mainstream media from Hollywood films to documentaries. These projects explore the concept of interracial dating in America. One recent film, *Something New*, explores the realms and levels of stress of Kenya McQueen, a successful African American woman on the verge of making partner at a prestigious accounting firm, and Brian Kelly, a White architectural landscaper, as they try to pursue a romantic relationship.

The beginning of the movie focuses on Kenya's nonexistent love life and at the urging of her friends to try "something new," she finds herself on a blind date with Brian. Horrified that he is White she cuts the date short.

Throughout the film, Kenya battles with her feelings and the opinions of her family and friends about dating Brian. During a family gathering, a comment from her brother, Nelson, is an example of the difficulties successful African American women have when dating White men. Nelson said, "What's this I hear about you skiing the slopes? Are you sneaking off to the OC? Are you sleeping with the enemy?"

On the flip side, the film, *Save the Last Dance*, explores the Black man-White woman relationship. Sara Johnson, a former ballerina from the suburbs, and Derek Reynolds, a promising high school student from the "hood," fall for each other through their shared love of dancing. But as the two become more serious, they experience harsh disapproval and racist remarks from their friends and families. This film depicts their frustrations with constantly being forced to defend their love. Sara tells Derek, "We spend more time defending our relationship than actually having one!"

In February 2007, an HBO documentary titled, "Interracial Dating in America" featured interviews with people from across the spectrum about relationships. It also investigated the long held issue Black women and some Black men have with professional athletes marrying and dating White women and the double standard Black women are held to when they choose to date a White man.

"I think brothers need to turn around and ask their other brothers, the professional athletes, the stars, the very high paid brothers who feel like they need a white girl when they get to that position," said one of the women interviewed. "So ask them...why they don't turn around and reach back?"

Another woman, who was also African American, condemned Black men

for "mixing" blood and claims interracial dating is "impure."

According to the 1997 U.S. Census, 311,000 interracial couples existed in the U.S. 201,000 of those couples were Black males with White females while 110,000 were Black females with White males.

The reasons for dating across the color line vary from individual to individual. In the November 1999 Ebony magazine article, "Black Women White Men, White Women Black Men - Interracial Relations," author Lynn Norment wrote, "the educational attainment for Black females has increased 55 percent since the mid 70s whereas there is only a 20 percent increase with Blacks. Many professional college educated sisters end

"The reasons for dating across the color line vary from individual to individual."

up dating White men because there is simply a shortage of Blacks on their level. Thus educated professional African American women find it difficult to date within their color lines."

Love comes in different colors and we cannot control who we love. At the end of the day, love is not about a person's skin color or race, but the vibe between two people. As college campuses, classrooms, and workplaces become more diverse, the stigma of dating across the color line will also continue to become a thing of the past.

2 on men

by: serrano legrand

When mentioning African American history, and specifically African American males, the likes of Malcolm X, W.E.B Dubois, Martin Luther King Jr., Huey P. Newton, and Bill Cosby instantly serve as the preface for ingenuity, power, and dominance. However, in recent times, the positive connotations once associated with these characteristics have now become associated with an over-powering, overly aggressive, mad Black man- a role society is becoming less appreciative and less understanding of.

The role of the Black man in the household falls into two categories: either he is the rule-maker, works full time and demands the most respect because he is the bread winner; or he is simply non-existent.

This authority of the Black man in the home was developed during the post-slavery era. During this time, African Americans were slowly rehabilitating from their battle with oppression and were given limited opportunities to own land, buy a house and work. As Frances M. Beal wrote in "Slave of a Slave No More: Black Women in Struggle," "Black women give men within the household a false feeling of superiority... [as] it alleviates capitalist tension... [like] being subjected to the ruling class... and all dehumanizing tactics."

Though history has shown this stereotype to be true, modern day research has shown women are becoming the "man of the house." That is, their responsibilities are shifting from being the housewife in areas of cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children to becoming the sole financial provider. It is reported women of color make up 14.5 percent of the entire work force. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Black men in professional occupations are being outpaced by Black women in professional occupations. There are 2.77 million Black women and 2.44 million Black men based on the 38,000 companies that reported to the Commission.

Though there is no concrete data proving Black women rising in the workforce is diminishing the role of Black men in the household, there are implications that suggest women taking the role of provider are becoming increasingly aggressive and shifting toward a newer breed of "mad Black women." But the question of where Black men are in regards to the household still remains.

Black men have been also typecast as the non-existent man or as deadbeat dads. Current data shows nearly 68 percent of African American children are born into single family households where the mother is the sole provider.

According to the U.S Census Bureau, there were 180,000 black children living with only a father in 1980 and by 1989 the number had increased to 340,000 children. Recently it was reported that 15.2 percent of the black male population in the United States are taking care of a household by themselves with children.

But as illustrated in the mainstream media in movies such as "The Pursuit of Happiness," there is a new generation of hardworking, intelligent, single Black

"The role of the Black man in the household falls into two categories: either he is the rule-maker...or he is simply nonexistent."

men who provide for their children with the hopes of giving them a better life than they had. Hence, leading by example is now becoming the mindset of these young black men.

Simultaneously, being equipped to uphold their duties in a household is slowly diminishing this man-made concept of having to be the aggressive "man of the house."

3 on women

by maxine roca

Strong, nurturing, loyal Black woman. Confrontational, ignorant, sexualized Black woman.

Stereotypical images bombard us daily. They have become such a prominent part of mainstream media and it seems many of us have been desensitized to these images. Although most television and movie characters fall into some stereotype, Black women seem to have increasingly negative images on screen. The dichotomy between how Black women see themselves and what they see in the media seems to portray conflicting images. We know all the stereotypes but do we know where they come from?

Historically, Black women in the United States have been put into one of three categories. And though we may believe these images have long abandoned us, a closer look reveals they have simply undergone a sort of transformation. Initially these stereotypical images were put in place to ease the minds of those who feared Blacks.

One of the earliest images of Black women in mass entertainment was the “Mammy” character. In Hollywood’s early years, this character dominated the big screen. Mammy was usually depicted as a large, dark-skinned Black woman with large lips, white teeth and a brightly colored apron. She was a domestic worker content with serving others and, in this context, particularly content with serving her master. Coincidentally she was also aggressive toward Black men. Her purpose in the home was solely to cook, clean, and take care of the children. Physical attributes one would equate with femininity and sexuality- namely the breasts and buttocks- were depicted as droopy and undesirable. Mammy did not emanate sexuality and so she presented no threat to the White world she inhabited.

The image of Mammy later shifted

into another character commonly known as “Sapphire.” During the Depression and World War II, pop culture produced the figure of Sapphire: a Black woman who was “evil, treacherous, bitchy, stubborn, and hateful.” Sapphire is portrayed as stout, medium to dark brown, headstrong and opinionated. This character is not taken seriously by African American males and as a result, she gets away with saying outrageous things. Her role, most notably, is to emasculate Black men, depicting them as lazy and unworthy. What is also interesting is this image of a Black woman is not sexualized. In his book, “Misogyny and the Emcee: Exposing the (S)exploitation of Black Women in Hip Hop,” author Ewuare Osayande says

“Historically, Black women in the United States have been put into one of three categories. And though we may believe these images have long abandoned us, a closer look reveals they have simply undergone a sort of transformation.”

the Sapphire stereotype was “utilized by White males, who could justify their dehumanization and sexual exploitation of Black women, and by males, who could reasonably claim that they could not get along with Black women because they were so evil.”

However one of the most enduring images of a Black woman is the “Jezebel” character. She is usually portrayed as a thin, fair-skinned Black female with thin lips, a thin nose, and long straight hair. Interestingly enough this character conforms to the American, not African, standard of beauty. This is perhaps why this image has managed to maintain its grasp on America. The Jezebel character can be traced back as early as the 1630s. She is the “ideal” woman, hyper sexual-

ized and constantly looking for ways to seduce multiple lovers, including White men. This image was used as way to rationalize, if not justify, the often non-consensual sexual relationships between slave-owners and slaves.

Do any of these images seem shocking or unreasonable? These images have stayed with us for generations and have elevated to positions where they are glamorized. Can’t remember seeing “Mammy” anywhere? Think about the original Aunt Jemima before she got a perm. What about our modern day Madea or Hattie Mae from *Big Momma’s House*? All these women are homemakers who are also large and aggressive. Can’t remember seeing Sapphire? What about Omorosa from “The Apprentice” with her brazen attitude and outrageous comments? And Jezebel? Well it seems every image we see on a music video is Jezebel reincarnated. There are dozens of light skinned females with long, straight hair and light colored eyes on our television screens. It seems as if these women who have given up their natural African looks in exchange for White America’s ideal portrayal of beauty, have coincidentally been accepted into mainstream society rather quickly.

Society perpetuates stereotypes and any Black woman who can successfully pull off the stereotype is catapulted into fame. It is not to say that Black women should not be strong, opinionated, or sexual in nature. Nor should a woman feel as if she must have an afro and un-permed hair to prove she is Black. Everyone should have the right to be as they please-stereotype or not. However, one must ask if perpetuating the stereotypes given to us by slave-owners is counter-productive to the advancement of Black culture and Black women in general? A Black woman should be able to embody strength and sensibility while being opinionated, knowledgeable, sexual and spiritual. And until a Black woman can portray this image on television or in movies, there will be no fair portrayal of Black women in media.

4 amongst ourselves

by: jennifer barris

When a Black student enters a room filled with Whites, he expects people to misjudge him. But when entering a room filled with Blacks, it may come as a surprise that his Black peers are also looking at him from a stereotypical perspective. His clothes may evoke disapproving views. Because he's not wearing RocaWear, Ecko, or Sean John, some might say he's not "Black enough." This is a sad perspective; because the only requirement for being Black is your African ancestry.

According to a study published in *Education Next* titled, "Acting White" author Roland G. Fryer defined acting White as "a set of social interactions in which minority adolescents who get good grades in school enjoy less social popularity than White students who do well academically." He cites many examples of this including a study conducted by psychologist Angela Barnett who asked students to define actions classified as White behaviors. The students replied with answers from, "speaking standard English and enrolling in an Advanced Placement or honors class" to "wearing clothes from the Gap or Abercrombie & Fitch instead of Tommy Hilfiger or FUBU."

Why is it that some African Americans feel inferior to others within their own race? What is it about them that is so different from those who discriminate against them? Is there a contradiction in this situation and are Blacks crippling themselves from climbing the socioeconomic ladder? The answers to all of these questions are centered on the unfortunate fact that Blacks stereotype other Blacks.

African Americans are often faced with negative stereotypes that make it difficult for some to rise above society's low standards and achieve above and beyond what is expected. According to a 2000 study by the U.S. Census Bureau, of the 281,421,906 people living in the U.S., 34,658,190 are Black and 211,460,626 are White. Because Caucasians are the majority, many African Americans assume it is Whites who perpetuate these prejudices, when in fact African Americans also hold negative stereotypes within their own race. Therefore, whenever someone doesn't fit the stereotype, they are categorized as "acting White."

A high achieving African American student is said to be "acting White" because of her academic success. As a result, she is seen as a social outcast among her Black peers who she thought she could identify with the most. While it seems unnecessary and inappropriate for Blacks to discriminate against each other, in reality this may be an involuntary choice, because of the ever-growing labels the media portrays of African Americans. Television shows and networks such as Chappelle's Show, MTV and BET support the rise of harmful labels on Black people. These networks and television shows promote the idea that Blacks are uneducated and poor.

For example, VH1's reality show "I Love New York" makes it seem as though a Black woman can only find love if she wears revealing clothes, has fake hair, and attempts to find love while pursuing more than one man. According to www.realitytvworld.com,

over 4.4 million viewers watched when it first aired giving the show one of the highest debut ratings in VH1 history. This show is a spin-off to "Flavor of Love," another reality show where former rapper, Flavor Flav, uses misspelled, demeaning names for the women. "Flavor of Love" drew a staggering 7.5 million viewers, making it the most watched show on basic cable in 2006.

With so many people watching these shows, Black stereotypes become socially accepted and proceed to ruin the hopes of the Black race in breaking them.

Leslie Williams, a freshman at Northeastern described his thoughts on stereotypes and discrimination within the Black race.

"Being a Black person, I'm probably more aware because stereotypes are portrayed in the media day in and day out," Williams said. "And it seems to be accepted and enjoyed by the general public, including Blacks."

There is a serious contradiction we must address. When Whites stereotype us, Blacks get defensive and are quick to call them racists. But are they not only doing what we do to ourselves? Being Black is not about young men dressing like rappers. It is not about Black women shaking their behinds. It is not about getting poor grades. Being Black is about being conscious of where your people come from and what they have gone through to give our generation a chance at equality. A lifestyle that was once denied to Black people is now accessible by way of countless lives committed to the struggle. We must remember those who have struggled for us and seek to make their struggles worth it as we become successful in ways never thought possible.

this is my

GHETTO STORY

BY: ASHA CESAR

The racial epithet that has grown in esteem and usage in mainstream media is a word that we often use to characterize minorities: “ghetto.” The word “ghetto” is no longer attributed to where someone lives but rather how they live. It is a mindset that embraces and celebrates the worst. Behavior that went against the norm is now tolerable and has become humdrum. “Ghetto” denotes a stereotypical view of minorities, specifically the members of the African Diaspora community. The messages in today's rap lyrics diverge significantly from the ones of self-determination and Afro-centricity that subjugated in the 1980s. The original meaning of the term “ghetto” was a quarantined section of the city where the Jews were forced to live during WWII in Germany.

Urbanictionary.com not only mentions this definition but other definitions which illustrate how the word has evolved from its original meaning. According to this site, words such as “hood,” “gangsta,” “nigga,” “nigger,” “whore,” “redneck,” “white trash,” “money,” “crime” and “ebonics” are all words that are associated with what constitutes as “ghetto.” Some of these words aren't even real English words, they are slang terms. Quite frankly, if Microsoft Word has to put a red line underneath a word such as ‘gangsta’ or ‘nigga,’ then maybe you shouldn't use it in a conversation!

In addition, the website also includes sentences where one could apply the word. One example they give is, “John's paranoia about triple-checking whether or not he's locked his car doors comes from his growing up in the ghetto.” Another is, “Jane hid her head in embarrassment as her mom shamelessly committed the ghetto act of stuffing the restaurant's bread rolls, sugar packets, and silverware in her purse.”

Lately cultural critics hold hip-hop culture responsible for the dominance of these negative stereotypes. But doing

so, some academics say, fails to take into account the role of hip-hop consumers -- predominantly white, suburban teenagers -- and media conglomerates that capitalize on playing it up. Shows like MTV's “Pimp My Ride” and rappers like Snoop Dogg, who celebrates conquering women and smoking dope, become successes.

According to an article in the *Boston Globe*, Emmett Price, a professor of music and African American studies at Northeastern University, said the focus on the words misses the fact that an audience still wants music with this content.

“It's hard to hold people morally and socially responsible when the people with money don't have to be,” he said.

One of the newer meanings of “ghetto” is authenticity/realism. It's a way of claiming, “I'm real. I'm a real gangsta. I'm a real hoodrat'... There's privilege associated with being in these downcast and downtrodden situations,” said Price. “You'll find middle-class people who will dress down so they won't be identified with the middle class.”

Maybe this is the reason why people who actually set high standards for themselves are sometimes looked down upon because it is becoming the norm to downgrade. Spencer*, a White Northeastern freshman, admitted that he has used the word “ghetto” in a comfortable setting and in a variety of ways. “Ghetto is a description of something different; possibly trashy and possibly fun,” he said. “Yes. I have used it to describe a Black person in a negative manner but for me it's not a word specific for Black people. I used to call my mom ghetto but she didn't like that!”

It is amazing to see how words like this have evolved to become practically

derogatory and how we use that as a fuel for entertainment and prosperity. There are many other ways of saying something and making a point without using the word “ghetto.” “Tacky” or “uncouth” are both words that could be used as a substitute. What also makes “ghetto” questionable in terms of appropriateness is the fact that Black people use it against each other. Whether it is jokingly or not, there is still a negative connotation whenever it is used. I challenge anyone to go and ask a White or Black person what they think of when they think of Black people and you will probably get at least one person who says that they think “ghetto.”

Another thing African Americans need to stop doing is getting mad or accusing White people of being ignorant and rude when they use the word. If Black people use it, listen to music with it and buy it how hypocritical are they to say that White people can't. The same goes for other words such as “nigger”. Should any race or ethnicity even remotely think to use the word “nigger”? That word was originally and will always be a derogatory term used to keep Black people ignorant and inferior. How is it that all of the sudden it's considered ok to use it in songs and in normal conversation? Especially those who use it to greet each other: “What up my nigga?”

What the heck is that? So, because you took away the “er” and added an “a”, that takes away from the severity of the word? I wish life was that simple. If you got a 60 on an exam and then just took away the zero and added a 5 and flipped the 6, it would say 95 on your paper, but in the teacher's book you still have that 60! So did that really do anything?

Not so much.

* LAST NAME WITHHELD FOR PRIVACY.

Walking in the Wake:

A Father's Legacy and a Son's Pride

BY DR. RICHARD O'BRYANT

In these excerpts from "Walking in the Wake: A Father's Legacy and a Son's Pride," Dr. Richard O'Bryant details the legacy of John D. O'Bryant, his father, the first African-American to be appointed a vice president at Northeastern University.

It never ceases to amaze me how many people he touched. In another instance, after a meeting, I was giving a ride to a longtime friend of my father and my family. Robert¹ was a student of my dad's, and after my dad's passing we remained very good friends with him. Unexpectedly, as we were getting out of the car, he turned and said, "Rich, your father is the reason I am where I am today." And I responded to the comment with a polite, "Thank you, I appreciate you letting me know that." He noticed my lack of empathy for what he was trying to tell me; his face grew serious. "No," he said, "I do not think you understand. He literally saved me from myself." His change in demeanor let me know he was really trying to tell me something. "What do you mean?" I asked. Tears began to well up in his eyes. This man was like an uncle to my brothers and me, we had known him most of our lives, and we knew if we needed anything we could count on him. Pacing himself, he began his story, "When I was a high school sophomore at the school where your father taught . . . I was a member of a gang—a real bad ass. When I stood out on the street corner, people crossed the street to avoid walking past me. One day your father just walked up to me and said, 'You think you are tough don't



My dad, John O'Bryant, standing beside Ralph Lebeau, the person I called Robert, discussing political strategy with campaign workers. Ralph passed away in 2006.

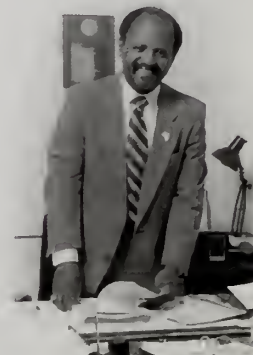
you?' His face now shifted expression and was less pained and he told me that he was caught off-guard that my dad spoke to him and that he did not know what to think. He told me he tried to contain his surprise and that he sheepishly responded to my dad, 'Yeah I do.' My dad then told him, 'Come to football practice tomorrow after school, and we'll see how tough you are.'

This former tough guy that everyone avoided went to football practice and ended up becoming an all-state linebacker. He was later recruited to a historically black college. He said, "And the rest, as they say, is history." My dad stayed involved in his life through college; currently he is a successful

architect and developer who attributes his success to my dad getting involved in his life. I had not known that story. My dad never bragged about what he did, and I am always thankful to hear stories such as these. Robert and I exchanged an extended bear hug that day, and he said to me, "Rich, thank you for doing the work you are doing with young men. Someday someone will let your children know how important your work is to them and the community."

A teacher, I have learned, is a powerful force in a child's life, especially if it is a teacher who inspires and encourages achievement of hidden goals and talents that serve to bolster the child's self esteem. As a teacher, my dad had future doctors, lawyers, business owners, school teachers, college professors, college administrators, architects, politicians, and law-enforcement officers who came to him for advice and guidance. Fortunately, many of these people my family has had the pleasure to meet. I am truly humbled by my father's contributions and the love that others have shown him and my family.

In addition to encouraging and giving direction to students, my



My dad as vice-president of student affairs at Northeastern University at his desk.

father understood the plight of African American professionals. His life-long, professional commitment to improve education was equally important to identifying and creating support systems, organizations, and education



Myself, brothers and cousins with other kids from the community listening intently to my dad's inspiring words.

opportunities for black professionals. He did this kind of work while serving as chairman of the Council of Urban Boards of Education. My father was an incorporator and President of the Black Educators' Alliance of Massachusetts, an organization that continues to this day to fight for the rights of black educators all across Massachusetts. My dad humbly received numerous awards for his work and he always thanked my mother for her loving support. The Drum Major Award for Peace is given at one of the country's largest ceremonies honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. While doing research for this chapter, I came across the program from the ceremony honoring him that morning. He had scrawled across the biography with the youthful picture of him, "To my wife Cicily, the love of my life."

If my father, for as long as I can remember, was not working to create opportunities for others, he was ensuring that opportunities were not lost because of a lack of resources. Well before my father's political career blossomed, he held an annual fundraising event called the "Bean Supper." These suppers are legendary among community activists of my

father's era. I love to hear the elders tell me stories about the suppers and those times of great community pride and unity that made these fundraisers so successful. My brothers and I were still too young to fully understand what the Bean Supper was all about, but we would help my dad set up endless amounts of tables and chairs, and we would stay until everyone left to clean up. It was not until I was an adult that I truly realize and appreciate what my dad was engaged in and why it was so important to him. The money raised from the Bean Suppers went directly to the NAACP Educational Counseling Committee Scholarship Fund (NECCSF).

My father was so very committed to helping students (young and old) to pursue their educational goals that he remained the co chair of the scholarship committee at the NAACP regardless of the positions he held in his professional life. My mother told me that he would personally review all the applications and the presentation of scholarships since the early sixties. In memory of my father's commitment, the NECCSF² was named after him and he would be pleased to know that the fund continues to grant scholarships today. As a young boy, I viewed the many things that my father did as work. Now, as a man, I understand that the things my father worked at were more a labor of love. It is in his shadows that I try to live up to his expectations for me and I attempt to make my own contribution to the world. And just when I think I have it all figured out, I realize that I have only just begun to comprehend and be inspired by the scale of my father's work and impact.

When my dad became director of the Health Vocational Training Program at Dimock Street Community Health Center, I can remember visiting him and asking, "Daddy what do you guys do here?" Without remembering his actual response I can certainly paraphrase from the time I spent

with him as a teen and a young adult. "We are training students in the field of health sciences to become para-professionals." I would respond, "What is a para-professional?" In his gentle, patient, and instructional manner he explained, "Para-professionals are people in the field of health that help doctors care for their patients." He would go onto say, "They can be nurses' assistants, medical secretaries, medical clerks, operating room technicians, assistants for people who run hospitals or health care facilities—people like that." "Do you actually teach them yourself?" "When I was a teacher in the Boston Public School system, I actually taught students but, now I make sure that teachers, trainers, and students have the resources they need to teach, train, and learn." "Wow, that sounds like a big job!" "It can be at times, but I like what I do so it is really not a big deal." For my dad no job was ever too big when it came to helping people. His commitment was without comparison.

For Boston, the 1970s was a decade characterized by turmoil. Much of the city's tensions centered on its boiling race relations in general, and the condition of the Boston Public School system in particular. Boston's black and white communities were at opposite ends of the spectrum when it came to dividing up the school system's power structure, resources, and facilities. This extreme difference in opinion, and the clearly racial connotations that the debate took on, created a mine-filled battleground for Boston politicians. Unfortunately, Boston erupted. Fortunately, there were a number of rising political leaders in Boston at the time. In particular, Mel King has garnered national recognition for his expertise in conducting and organizing

¹ Name has been changed for privacy.

² This fund operated under the auspices of the Roxbury Multi-Service Center.

political movements. Mel, who was the best man in my parents' wedding, encouraged my dad to run for a seat on the Boston School Committee. Mel's work in Boston's politics has earned him considerable respect. Politics was a serious matter to him, especially when it came to policies that impacted the black community. Sometime earlier in the '60s, Mel made an unsuccessful run for a seat on the school committee and felt my dad had the right stuff to win. Mel was a tremendous inspiration for my dad, and, as I would soon learn, a huge inspiration for me once my father had gone.

Campaigning was hard work, but even for a kid my age it was a good experience for my brothers and me. We met so many different people that agreed with my father's ideal. I remember going door-to-door circulating flyers for his 1975 campaign. The flyers in bold black print stated my father's vision for a quality public school system that focused on the educational needs of poor kids of all colors. This vision became the mantra of his future campaigns, and underlying theme for his professional career.

The first run my father made for a citywide seat on Boston School Committee was unsuccessful. The thought had never occurred that my dad would lose, and I took it particularly hard. There was standing room only at his campaign headquarters. I remember my father trying hard to calm the emotionally charged crowd. He yelled out at the crowd from the podium, with my mother at his side, "We fought a good fight and although we were not successful this time, the race is not to the swift but to those who can endure!" My father followed up with, "We will be back!" and the racially diverse crowd let out a thunderous applause.

What a magnificent feeling it was when my dad won the citywide seat on the Boston School Committee in

1977. It was a wondrous victory for the black community on many levels. My dad was the first African American to achieve such an accomplishment in more than a century. This fact was not missed by the media, which in turn generated more attention to my father's achievements from cities and towns across the country. John D. O'Bryant had made history. The historical division of Boston along racial lines also made my dad's victory all the more remarkable. His success can be traced back to his teaching relationship with his students, who lived all over the city, and volunteered to work on my dad's campaign. My father never made any apologies for his commitment to black children, but knew his hard work would improve education for all students regardless of color.

Not everyone in Boston was pleased with my dad's accomplishment. During his first term on the school committee, I answered what turned out to be an alarming phone call. For some reason I cannot remember now, I was home from school. The phone rang, and as any preteen would, I rushed to pick it up. I did not recognize the voice on the other end. The caller asked, "Is John O'Bryant home?" "No," I responded wanting to get back to whatever it was I was doing, "my dad is not home." My heart began to pound as I listen to each hate-filled word that was spat at me. The man's heavy Boston accent was unmistakable, "Tell your father he's a dead man! Tell him we are going to get him." I was horrified. Frightened and near tears, I called my mother. All I could do was scream into the phone asking, "Where's daddy?" It was several minutes before she

could calm me down. My dad called shortly after getting off of the phone with my mom. My dad reassured me that he was okay. He went on to say, "I, unfortunately, get phone calls like that all the time."

I do not know how many death threats my father received over the six terms he served on the school committee, but he told me that he notified the FBI of any threats that he received. He went on to say to me the bravest thing I ever heard a man say. I know it troubled him that any one of us had received a call like this. He said, "Unfortunately, Rich, there are people in the world that are not so nice, and I won't say that I don't sometimes get afraid, but I can't allow them to stop me from doing my work or believing in what I am trying to do." I realized that at that moment the enormous commitment my dad had made to our people. He knew that his life could very well have been in danger for doing what he truly believed was right.

An even stranger twist to the testament that people hated my father's work and what he stood for, was that one of my high school teachers, it was later revealed, was threatening to kill me if my father did not "stop that black stuff." My parents did not tell me that there were FBI agents periodically



Our family in front of a poster in Dudley Square recognizing my dad's dedication to Boston.

following me in school. I cannot imagine the strain this must have caused my dad and mother. The threatening teacher was bold enough to say I was a student in his class and would taunt my parents by describing what I wore to school. This whole ordeal ended without my knowing. The teacher was eventually arrested. I do not know how my father was able to stay focused, and resist the temptation to just give in. Sometimes when I lose focus, and feel like it is too much, I am touched when I remember how my father would tell me as a kid

All the kids in Boston schools need an honest, competent voice on the School Committee.

John O'Bryant plans to fight for
changes on the School Committee.
Here's his plan:

1. Outline the current system of electing school personnel to contribute to the campaigns of School Committee members.
2. Hold down school spending. Eliminate padding. Cut the number and salaries of administrators. Reorganize the school bureaucracy.
3. Insist that teachers teach. Judge teachers by their ability to educate, not their ability to make political contributions.
4. Work to have the Federal Court withdraw from running the schools, by getting the Committee to comply with the law and make responsible decisions.



An excerpt from my dad's campaign flyer.

growing up, "You have to do what you have to do and you can't live your life in fear."

July 3, 1992 was the day that the importance of my father's work began to crystallize for me. Unbeknownst to me, it was the day my mission began to emerge. When we arrived home from my father's funeral, the media was camped out at our front door. Headlines read, "Boston loses one of its most dedicated sons," and "Boston's public education has lost one of its most committed advocates," and my favorite "A hero of the black community is gone."

Since my father's passing, I have watched the blossoming of several organizations across the country. Right here in Boston, the high school that I attended, which is also the school where he started his teaching career, was named after him. The John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science, one of the many community organizations he helped to establish, is only a few blocks from the Roxbury Community College in the black community. Northeastern University, in recognition of my dad's hard work for students of all colors, renamed their African American Institute the John D. O'Bryant African American Institute. The Roxbury Multi-Service Center, a thirty-year-old social service agency that my dad also helped to bring to life in the heart of the black community, created the John D. O'Bryant Community Youth Center. Our family established the John D. O'Bryant Scholarship Fund, which my mom maintains to this day. This was the type of work my dad felt was most important of all. He wanted to make sure that if a student wanted to get a higher education, we all had to make sure that happened. My father was also keenly aware of the fact that students needed to see faculty that reflected them. And although my father never took the time to acquire a doctorate, many in academia who are familiar with his tireless work in education and in the black community endearingly referred to him as Dr. O'Bryant.

In my father's later years, he was in the process of starting a national organization that would be dedicated to supporting black professionals involved in higher education on predominantly white campuses. Again, my father was thinking ahead to a place where only he could see. He was a true visionary when it came to creating supports for those who would come behind him.

And perhaps in his thinking ahead for my brothers' and my futures, he sparked a relationship with fellow educator Dr. Eric Abercrombie. Doc, as I like to call him, came into my life and has proven to be an instrumental role model in my life ever since.

Dr. Abercrombie asked if he could dedicate one of the annual Black Man Think Tank³ conferences in my father's memory, along with a number of other soldiers who had passed on. My family agreed and my brother James and I traveled to Cincinnati, Ohio, for the conference. Our reception was overwhelmingly warm, and my experience at the Think Tank Conference was remarkable and life changing. Since then we have established a great friendship, and I consider him a confidant and mentor. Doc took control of my father's vision for a national organization for black professionals and named it the John D. O'Bryant National Think Tank for Black Professionals in Higher Education on Predominantly White Campuses (JDOTT), of which I am a general and regional board member. The organization has become a beacon of light and support for many black professionals making their way through the wilderness of higher education. The membership of JDOTT has grown to more than 100 professors, administrators, staff, and students. It goes without saying that my dad would have been pleased to know there are growing support systems for black professionals.

Yes, losing my father was distressing ten years ago. I had no idea how I was going to bounce back from that. I guess if he were not such a dynamic man, I would not have missed his presence so dearly. He truly was the life of my party.

³ The Black Man Think Tank conference started by Dr. Abercrombie focused on issues, strategies, and solutions that are specifically targeted to black men, black families, and the black community.

White INSTITUTION

a black voice in a predominately white institution

BY MARGARET KAMARA

Today only a few truly know the history of the *Onyx Informer* and what the newspaper, now magazine, stood for. Thirty five years ago it was a name that everyone knew.

It was the voice for African American students and later, the voice for

all students of the African Diaspora at Northeastern. Ted Thomas, one of the four founders of the *Onyx*, recalls the obstacles of creating the publication and the motivational forces that keep it in print today.

"When the *Onyx* first published in 1972 there was a war in Vietnam still going on. There was some politics, people trying to sort out where Black students should go in the wake of the 1960s," Thomas said. "We came to college in the shadow of all of this, and we were reminded by [other] Black students on campus that [there had been] a struggle to get us on campus...and we had the mindset that a great deal of sacrifices was made for us, and we had to recognize that."

Thomas recognized the struggles and was even more aware of the sacrifices.

"We had to work with an administration that did not see eye to eye with us," he said. "Racism was a central problem at Northeast-

ern and the nation."

The struggle for a Black voice on campus was a fairly new concept in the late 1960s and did not begin with the *Onyx*. It began in 1968 with a Black student-run monthly newsletter, the *Panga Nyeusi*, or Black Sword, which was housed in the African American Institute (AAI). The newsletter covered international, national and campus news and how it pertained to Black students.

But after some controversy between Black students at the AAI and the AAI administration, the newsletter ceased publication in January 1972.

The need for a Black voice became even more urgent and the *Onyx* fulfilled that need in the fall of 1972, when four members of the former *Panga Nyeusi* approached the Dean of Student Activities, Harvey Vetstein, to pitch their idea. The four students included Robert Gitens, Ileen Dotson, Harold Hunte and Ted Thomas.

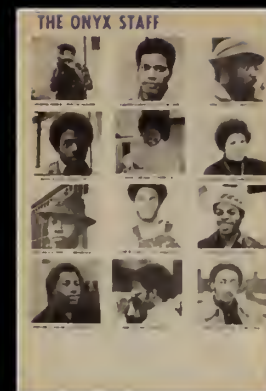
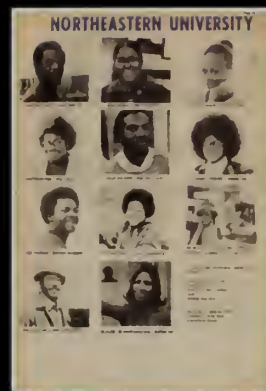
However, instead of encouraging the idea, Dean Vetstein suggested they join the two existing University publications, the *Northeastern News* and the *Northeastern Today*, but the four students did not take no for an answer.

The students turned to the new director of the African American Institute, Gregory T. Ricks, who supported the request for a Black student publication. The *Onyx* soon became an official organization and on Nov. 3, 1972, the first



The *Onyx* Issue #1

Right: Selections from the Onyx First Anniversary Issue.



issue appeared on campus.

The *Onyx* is named after a stone that has the ability to reflect different colors, which also represents the varying experiences of African Americans and other people of color.

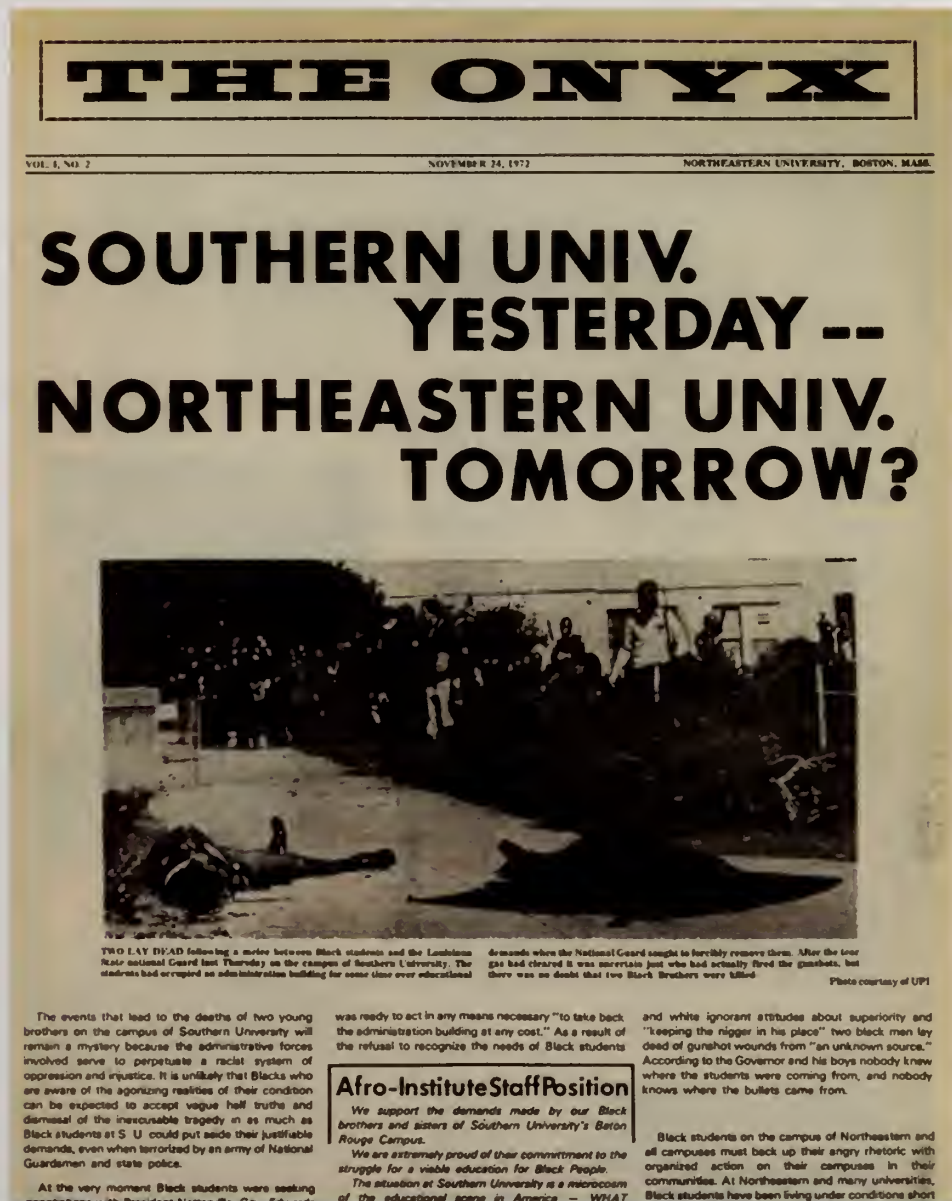
To this day, the mission of the *Onyx* is to be the voice for students of the African Diaspora here at Northeastern. And though we operate with a staff that fluctuates from semester to semester, we try our best to stay true to our legacy.

Over the last several years the *Onyx* has been criticized for being less political and militant when documenting the struggles of Blacks, but Thomas says the *Onyx* exists in a different era and the stand it takes today reflects this.

"I think the mission of the *Onyx*, from the original (fighting for a voice for African Americans) is good," he said. "I wish we could have done that but we were too busy trying to survive."

The *Onyx* has transitioned to include other people of color such as Africans, Arabs, Asians, Caribbeans, and Latinos because we all experience similar things and only by inclusion can this publication survive. That is what Thomas says it's all about.

"It's about how to survive on campus, and how to get academic, social and political help," he said. "And the *Onyx* does that in a myriad of ways through the things it chooses to print."



The Onyx Issue #2

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ONYX

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AAI to share your thoughts and ideas.

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The Round Table is an open, uncensored discussion on hot topics.

TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO BLACK HISTORY MONTH?

Please join Onyx Round Table editor Christine Williams and our Round Table participants: Northeastern University's Dave Moberg, Shandra Burch, Ashley Smith, and Parnel Jospitre as they discuss Black History Month.

Christine: We're here today to talk about Black History Month. As some of you know, there are some controversial views as to whether or not we should continue Black History Month, or whether the time has come for us to "move on" and not have it anymore. If anyone wants to open up the floor now, you can. What are your views?

Parnel: What's wrong with it to begin with? That's the only question I would have.

Dave: I don't know. I think that Black history doesn't necessarily need to be confined within February 1st to the 28th. I think that there are a lot of good things that people who are Black and American have done throughout history so that we don't need to lump it together in one month and close it off like that. I think that's unfair both to Black Americans and to Americans who are studying history as well. It doesn't make sense to sort of segregate history by race from month to month.

"I think it's well-intended but poorly executed."

Ashley: But you don't think it's meant to highlight those contributions, rather than to segregate them? I mean, would you suggest we should get rid of every month or all dates that commemorate significant events?

Dave: I don't question the intentions behind it. I just



question the implications.... Let me clarify. I don't think that there should be any sort of racial distinction that makes it any better or any worse for their contributions. I think that they should be taken in proper context... I think to give a bigger picture is more important. That's why I get wary when people say "oh, I'm going to celebrate Black History month this February." Well, [my thought is] why don't you celebrate the things that they do in September...in October? I think it's

“The contributions that we give to society cannot just be confined and commemorated within one month. It goes way beyond that...”



Shandra Burch

well intended but poorly executed.

Shandra: I’m actually gonna have to agree with that. I’m not quite sure if I agree that it should be stopped, but I do agree that is poorly executed... You can see why it is needed or why people intend for it to be, because Black history is not adequately taught in our educational system, and honestly, history, period, is not adequately taught...but as far as Black history

“...One of the questions that I think is really paramount for our society to answer is basically, what is the central message behind Black History Month, and who is it being targeted to?”

is concerned, the only things you really get in public schools is a couple people – mainly, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X...and that’s a very narrow-minded scope...as if there weren’t any other leaders like Marcus Garvey or current day leaders like Dr. Cornel West...If society would actually start looking at the current day contributions [they would see] the contributions that we give to society cannot be commemorated in just one month. It goes way beyond that...

Parnel: That’s the thing though. It’s a pretty big “if”.... If we could get rid of Black History Month, I’m all for it – ONLY if it was integrated into our curriculum. Because it’s not just Black history; it’s American history. I feel like we are always taught the same things in history [in general]. We’re taught about the forefathers, and Ancient Greece and all that, and that’s great...but then you get to part about Black Americans and it’s [just] “hmmm and once upon a time they were slaves”. Know what I mean? That’s it.

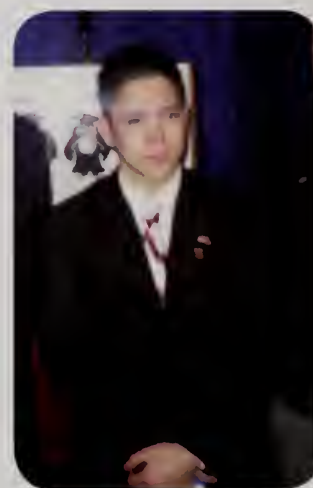
Ashley: I think I definitely agree with you. Many times when we’re talking about history, there are so many people’s histories that are left out. You get these brief snippets at different points, but mostly you get old, dead White guys’ perspective of history. You don’t hear about Native Americans. You rarely hear that much about women’s history, even... I definitely agree with you that we could get rid of [Black History Month], but the conversation would have to happen when it was somewhat comprehensive in society and in the education system so you would have the ability to do that.

Dave: I think a worse thing though, [worse] than ignoring, is to sort of re-segregate again... The fact that we still

feel like we need to separate those into “oh, here’s what the women did” and “here’s what the Blacks did” and “here’s what the Whites or the Asians did,” I think that’s just disappointing to me at this point... I think Martin Luther King said “we should judge each other by the content of our character and not the color of our skin”, but yet we still have to celebrate “X [individual]” because he was Black, White, or Asian or because she’s a woman [instead of] because this was a great contribution to our American society or because this was very important in our history.

Shandra: I thought of this today, and one of the questions that I think is really paramount for our society to answer is...What is the central message behind Black History Month, and who is it being targeted to? ...The central

message is to make everyone educated, but to be quite honest, if I were White, and I’m not, but if I were White [I’d be thinking] how does this really touch



Dave Moberg

me in my own personal life? That’s a question I think I’d want to ask either of the two of you (gesturing toward Ashley and Dave)... Because if [Black History Month] isn’t touching people realistically, and meeting them where



Ashley Smith

they are in their own experiences, there's really not a point to it. I think the same applies to [other months], for example Pride Week. What do these months, weeks mean to me...and the rest of society?

Ashley: I think a lot of times that the different groups need to get together and sit down and talk about all this. Just because if we're all talking in our own separate groups about issues, it never really accomplishes anything... As someone who is White and grew up having Black History Month, I think you (gesturing toward Shandra) are definitely right in that we learn the same things over and over again... I doubt how much people actually retain. I

that we interact with people...rather than trying to know everything [about every culture]...

Dave:I think you're right in that we need a mindset change to change how we view diversity issues.... Also as partially-White American, when I see Black History Month, immediately, not through as preconceived prejudices that I may or may not have myself, immediately I get the "oh here comes the whole PC (politically correct) police coming to get me, telling me I need to do all this." Unfortunately, it brings up negative connotations for me. I think because we're not the melting pot anymore – we're like, I don't know, the salad bowl where you see everything separate... I understand the intentions – we're trying to celebrate our differences, but I think diversity in the 21st century shouldn't mean separating anymore...

Shandra: I think Black History Month could turn into a month of activism – of actively speaking to really integrate Black history into our educational systems...One thing I think that's left out of Black History Month is the diverse thought among the Black community...and also not just Black contributions to Black history, but other ethnicities' contributions to Black history. And that's never really heard of. I think we're all being miseducated...I think that's why we're getting the same

so that everyone's history is incorporated into American history. You can never have a melting pot unless you respect the fact that all ethnicities had a part to do with the America you see today. (To Dave): One thing I disagree with you about is how you said that the fact that we celebrate Black History month is almost like segregation. I don't think that something that's meant to celebrate something is segregation. I think it's just a celebration...It's just like having a Mother's Day or a Father's Day. You're supposed to celebrate your mother and father everyday, not just May 14th or whatever... I don't think Mother's Day is a segregation against fathers. I'm not



Parnel Jospitre

gonna say *expletive* all women...
[Group Laughter]
Dave: I'm not saying that it is segregation; I'm saying that's how it's perceived... by a large portion of the country...

and I think that [for example] using White people ---

[Group Laughter]

Dave: Hey, I can say White people. I try to stay away from the whole racial distinction terms. I mean technically I'm a minority, believe it or not. I'm half Japanese, but I will never say I'm an Asian American or something like that. I think it's time that we move away from hyphenating our heritage...

Parnel: Mm.

Dave: ...I'm American. I have Japanese ethnicity within me; I have Swedish. I am the only Swedish Japanese person you'll ever meet by the way.

[Group Laughter]

Dave: I may have X in me, but...(to

“I don't think that something that's meant to celebrate something is segregation. I think it's just a celebration...”

think people take in as much as they are willing to take in, and however much they really want to know. I think it has to be deeper than just factual information. I think...we could dedicate more of our time to create a diverse mindset...to change the way

results that we gotten, twenty years ago. It's the same thing because it's the same mindset. It's got to change.

Parnel: That's true. (To Shandra): I agree, for the most part...with the fact that we need to rework our education. This history books need to be rewritten

Parnel): I can see where you're coming from but I think the Mother's Day/ Father's Day analogy is a stretch when you consider [Black History Month] is coming from a racial history that intertwined with American history has lots of hatred, lots of injustice, [and] lots of bigotry from people that have done terrible things. So it brings up all these other connotations that need to be brought up within our curriculum and our history books. But I think... setting aside a month specifically for this issue...in the 21st century, overall, is not helpful. I'm not saying that there never should have been a day for this... but today I think we need to move away from it...

Ashley: But I think that if we're talking about [Black History Month] in terms of a celebration, I don't think that anyone would suggest that you know, anyone that's Irish give up Saint Patrick's Day or people in the North End give up their celebrations of Italian festivals... I think that if we were all the same or we all had a shared history that was exactly the same, then we wouldn't have to have

solution to...resistance to making those changes. It would take a radical change to go back and re-write the curriculums that have been in place for a hundred years ... I think instead, they say "oh it's too much work and effort to change so here's this month, hopefully that will appease you."

Parnel: But I think that's the thing with Black History Month. I don't think it's supposed to end with just a month. Like before, I think it was just a day, and after that it was a week...and I know it was a week for a pretty long time THEN it was a month. I think [the month] is just a stepping stone... What everyone would like to see, and especially Black people would like to see, is for it to be 365.

Dave: ...But you know what instead

"...if we were all the same or we all had a shared history that was exactly the same, than we wouldn't have to have discussions like this. But I think...being able to share [our histories] with each other is a positive thing..."

discussions like this. But I think that it's unique to this country...Being able to share [our histories] with each other is a positive thing... And if we think of [Black History Month] as a celebration, we should definitely keep it in that respect, but it would have to be with the other changes that have to occur... I think at this point Black History Month is a "quick fix" or rather, the majority's

of celebrating diversity, now we're celebrating the fact that we're celebrating diversity. Instead of focusing on the great accomplishment that Black Americans have made....now we're focused on "oh look we're celebrating, we're so politically correct, good for us, pat me on the head....good job." The focus is shifting, and I don't like that...

Shandra: (Gesturing toward Dave):

There's a lot of truth in what he says. But there's a reality also. And the reality is in a large part of the country there is still a sense of racism... and up here there's a lot of institutionalized racism.



But what is Black History Month [trying to achieve]? Is it to say to someone "you have to commemorate this and you have to know about this or that"?....

Christine: [Well] just for the sake of time, to close up, what I'm hearing from everyone is there are a lot of issues with the presentation. Some people feel as if Black History Month should be integrated throughout the year. Others feel as if that may be an ideal, and that right now maybe we should keep it at a month [because] this is part of a progression. It started as a day, then a week, now it's a month – maybe it will evolve itself to a year – maybe. I can see views from each perspective, and I think largely that we as Americans contribute to the complexity of the issue because we still do hyphenate, we are still very much politically correct about how we celebrate. I think that has to do with the social constructs and the culture of America right now as it is. So, if you have to address Black History Month, you have to address the deeper roots [that led] to Black History Month.

“...instead of celebrating diversity, now we’re celebrating the fact that we’re celebrating diversity.”

If you had the power to change the presentation, however you may want to be, what would you do and how would you present it or how would you change it?...recognizing of course, that there are deeper issues.

Dave: I would take all of [Black History Month’s] good intentions and efforts and instead of condensing them into one month, I would instead, eliminate Black History Month, and take everything it intended to do and everything it intended to teach, and make that part of the main curriculum



They are rewritten every year. For history books there are 2007 editions, 2008 editions. You can go about this and start right away. It’s just waiting to happen, and for Americans to shift their mindset about how they think about race and progress.

also in all institutions... I think every needs to have a role in making sure that it is being integrated and people understand...Also, presenting a diverse view – moving away from the views that we’ve had in the past.

Ashley: I think we would have to

“I think it has to be deeper than just factual information. I think... we could dedicate more of our time to create a diverse mindset....”

of all education, especially history. Making sure to give adequate time to it not because they were Black or because they were Black Americans, but because they were an important part of our history that we all need to know about...

Christine: So you’re definitely starting with the children then - through education. [while they are] young, and changing the way the books are written?
Dave: Books are changed every year.

Shandra: [I would focus on] changing the way we are educated, presenting diverse thought, presenting all sorts of contributions from the Black community, including contributions from other communities to the Black community. If it takes a month, our educational system and our society really needs to be looked at and we really need to see that this is being integrated into our curriculum – not only into our elementary schools... but

teach from an early age how to have conversations about diversity and not shy away from it in a politically correct sort of way...to incorporate different topics...

Parnel: The only thing I have to say to rewrite the history books... from K-12. From kindergarten, teach them American history. American history as integrated as it is...and just take it from there. That’s it.

➔ Interested in joining a Round Table discussion? You too can be part of the experience. Send an email to Round Table editor Christine Williams at christinefromtheonyx@yahoo.com to volunteer!

Out & About

Danny Glover

BY ASHA CESAR

On October 29, actor Danny Glover came to Northeastern's Blackman Auditorium to discuss his social and political activism in third world countries as well as in the United



Asha with Danny Glover after the event.

States. The intimate event was held and organized by Haitian Student Unity and funded by the Budget Review Committee. Many recognize Glover in films like "The Color Purple," "Lethal Weapon," and his latest role in "Dreamgirls."

Professor Alan West-Durán of the Modern Languages Department facilitated the event and introduced Glover as one of the founders of the Trans African

Forum, a Washington, D.C. based organization that works in Africa and also with African populations in the Caribbean.

Throughout the evening, Glover discussed several topics including the employment rate for African Americans, globalization and industrialization of urban areas, community service and activism.

Glover credits his childhood with driving him from acting to community involvement.

"I was born 61 years ago," he said. "The images I saw were men and women who were mobilized to do change."

Because the importance of community service was implemented in him as a child, it followed him into adulthood. Born in San Francisco, Danny Glover graduated high school

in 1964. Not too long after his graduation, he was extremely moved by a speech from former President, John F. Kennedy.

"I always wanted to be a part of service," he said. "I felt that I could be of some use... I felt that doing a movie like the 'Color Purple' was doing a service. I am using my craft as a vehicle for service."

In his message, particularly for the students in the audience, Glover gave words of advice and encouragement.

"We have to become firemen," he said. "If we wake up thinking that we can save humanity ourselves then we are on to something...there's so much you can do as students."

The future for Mr. Glover looks promising. He is currently producing a film titled "Toussaint" which is scheduled to come out in 2009. This film discusses the Haitian leader Toussaint Overture and gives a historical context of the development of Haiti. For more information on Danny Glover's mission and other new projects, go to www.louverturefilms.com.

Awareness In Style

BY CANDICE SPRINGER AND MARGARET KAMARA

On the eve of World AIDS Day, the Cape Verdean Student Association (CVSA), in collaboration with NASO, XCEL, NUBiLAGa, MAPS and BAC, hosted "Fashionably Aware," an AIDS Awareness Fashion Show as part of a two-week awareness event to highlight this growing epidemic.

CVSA advisor Maritza Barros and Jose Silva, head of Lokuuraz Magazine, hosted the event, which quickly reached capacity in Curry Student Center's West Addition on the evening of Nov. 30. The show showcased a variety of styles from swimwear to evening gowns all created by local designers including Chandler Jewelry, Avari, 10Star, Scandalous Couture, and Praijie Couture.



CVSA models strut their stuff on the runway.

Several performers also hit the runway. CVSA vice president, Juanita Almeida, played the violin and was accompanied by Northeastern sophomore, Oumar Sow, as he delivered a spoken word piece about the importance of AIDS awareness. The Cape Verdean music group, the Barlavento Boys, and singer Rome also performed and urged the crowd to be safe and get tested.

"I thought [the event] went really well considering it was our first fashion show," CVSA executive board member, Herculano Fernandes, said. "Overall it was a big success. I think we made several strides toward [AIDS awareness]."

West Addition was home to a second fashion show hosted by Haitian Student Unity (HSU) in collaboration with MAPS and Sigma Gamma Rho, Sorority, Inc. They presented, "C No More, Flow Forever More" to raise awareness about sickle cell. A series of events were also hosted throughout the week to educate people about the disease.

Students from Northeastern and local colleges modeled the works from both well-known and local designers during the Dec. 1 show. The designers included Men's Warehouse, House of Culture, Brian Steven, Devikar, MadeMOIselle, Sparkle Thames, Sophisticated Swagg, and Deneen.

Between scenes, the emcees of the evening, Northeastern student Marsha White and UMass Boston student Mark Joseph, educated and quizzed the audience on their knowledge of sickle cell. Audience members were also awarded with prizes as they answered the questions.

Oumar Sow delivered his second powerful spoken word piece of the weekend titled "Ignorance" about his lack of knowledge on the disease. But it was a 3-year-old who stole the show as he performed his ABCs, accompanied by his mother, a victim of the disease.

"I just hope everyone had a great time," Peter Faiteau, an executive board member of HSU, said. "HSU, Sigma Gamma Rho, Inc. and MAPS [did] a great deal of work to make the week and the fashion show successful and to hopefully raise awareness [about sickle cell] throughout the campus."

Common

BY JORDAN MARTINS

Hip-hop superstar Common went from Chi-Town to Beantown to perform at the UMass Boston campus. Luckily, Northeastern's own 104.9 WRBB FM's program, S.A.B. (Save Another Brother) Radio, gave away tickets and sent four NU students to the Nov. 10, 2007 show.

Common certainly kept the crowd waiting with nearly an hour break between the opening act performed by Boston's own Special Teamz. But it was well worth the wait, as the emcee put on an electrifying performance complete with a DJ and a live band. Considering he's been in the game since 1992, Common has built a range of content from a critically acclaimed catalogue. His set was heavily dominated by songs from his more recent offerings, *BE* (2005) and *Finding Forever* (2006), although he did perform a couple numbers from his previous albums *Like Water For Chocolate* and *Electric Circus*.

Common found a number of ways to get the crowd going. His energy was infectious as he shouted and bounced around the stage for songs like "Go" and "The People." His performance of the emotionally charged, storytelling track "Testify" was as dramatic as a Broadway show, complete with stage posing and props, allowing the crowd to see his acting skills off the big screen. A lucky lady was also brought on stage to become the object of his affection, complete with enough physical contact to make her blush, for "Come Close." But the crowd interaction didn't stop there. He also had several call and response segments throughout his performance.

The lyrical artist has managed to keep his reputation as one hip-hop's realest talents by staying true to the art form's roots and displaying its different elements. He showed off some break dance moves and spit a special Boston freestyle complete with shout outs to Dorchester, the Celtics' Ray Allen, and the Patriots' Randy Moss. Common's band members also incorporated drum and keyboard solos while the DJ showcased his scratching skills. He even gave the crowd a run through hip-hop history as he performed some verses from classic songs, including the entire first verse of Nas's "N.Y. State of Mind."

Throughout the show, Common displayed excellent showmanship; no matter what he was doing he maintained clarity of voice and delivery. And although everyone in the

crowd wasn't familiar with his material, the energy of the performance kept everyone entertained.

A Pageant with a Cultural Twist

BY MARGARET KAMARA



Danny Rojas & Marsha White, winners of NASO's 2nd Annual King & Queen Cultural Pageant

Photo By Randell Dauda

On Saturday, Nov. 17 the Northeastern African Student Organization (NASO) hosted its Second Annual King & Queen Cultural Pageant, held in the Curry Student Center Ballroom, transformed into a black and gold palace.

The twelve contestants, six aspiring kings and six aspiring queens, represented countries in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and Asia. They competed for a chance to win \$300, an opportunity to appear on NASO's website and Facebook site, and VIP access to all of NASO's events.

Like traditional pageants, contestants were judged on a variety of categories including swimwear, talent, evening wear, traditional cultural attire and their response during the question and answer portion of the show.

During intermission, the audience enjoyed a bite of cultural appetizers like pakora, plantains, jerk wings, beef and chicken patties, and baklava, which were catered by Flames Restaurant, Indian Samraat, and Boston Shawarma.

Maria Luisa Palsencia, a junior at UMass Boston, belly danced and Northeastern Senior Juel Swanson, the current NASO Queen, performed a farewell dance.

As the votes were tallied, one of the judges, Hassan Bakar, owner of Africanradio.com and Mama Africa Production, doubled the reward to \$600 for the first place winner and added a guest appearance on his radio show and a T-Mobile Side Kick.

The winners of NASO's King and Queen Cultural Pageant were NU Sophomore Danny Rojas and Junior Marsha White.

The pageant is part of NASO's initiative to celebrate the various cultures of Boston area colleges and takes place every year the week before Thanksgiving break.

Ailey II Comes to NU

BY KHADIJA BURNS

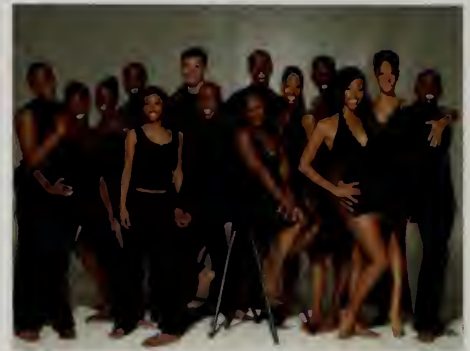
Every Alvin Ailey performance is never the same as the last. You can never expect what you'll see. But one thing you're promised is a great dancing experience. The art of dancing is extremely inspirational. With the combination of music, rhythmic beats and the strides of the dancers' steps, you are guaranteed to go home inspired to dance.

Ailey II performed for the Northeastern community on the night of Nov. 30 in the Curry Student Center Ballroom, hosted by Northeastern's Black Engineering Student Society (BESS)/National Society of Black Engineers (NESBE). The dancers came with their A-game showing us what dancing is really about as they stood on their toes, contorted their waists, and leaped across the stage with elegant grace.

The crowd roared during one dance scene in particular when a female dancer held a male dancer as he was wrapped around her waist. When she finished dancing she dropped him to the floor, stepped over him and preceded on her own. This movement highlighted her true strength.

Another scene in that set reminded me of a lover's spat. The two dancers were battling each other with motions and expressions representing love, confusion and determination. Her ability to carry this man and all of his weight said to me, "I am a woman with the strength to carry you and as a woman I will. But, when I'm fed up I will drop you and keep it moving. Don't get it twisted!"

This event was one of the best experiences I've had here at Northeastern and I would like to congratulate BESS/NSBE for a job well done!



Ailey II

Photo by Eduardo Patino



Blues Suite By Alvin Ailey

Ailey II company members

Photo by Eduardo Patino

SOUL speech

Submit to SoulSpeech
onyxeditor@yahoo.com

The Roach That Has Outdone Me Again

well you've done it again
slipped past my blows and
disappeared into a crack
in the bathroom wall

you think you're slick—but
i know what you're up to
i've always known that you
creep out at night when i'm
asleep and gorge yourself
on cornbread crumbs and the
juice from watermelon rinds

and i know you make babies
cause i've seen them—little
brown specks running their
asses off when they see me coming

i've thrown out the watermelon rinds
and swept up the cornbread crumbs
and sprayed in the crack where you
live, but you've still survived—walking
out of the shadows all bad when
company comes and running half-ass
across the dinner table when
my woman and me are eating

but i'll get you—i have to
or the next thing i know
you'll be asking for equality

By Ted Thomas

*All Soul Speech selections for this issue were
featured in the 1973 first anniversary issue of
The Onyx Informer.*

Sorrows

West of tomorrow I'll find the
magic key. That will make my future
what I'd like it to be. The flame and
the fury will be left behind. The only
thing that will consume me is time.

By Eddy Wilson

Roxbury Morning

the glass glitters in the street
and sunbeams form patterns
on my closed eyelids
forcing themselves on my privacy
like the smell of grits
drifting up from downstairs

i used to think it mattered
if i missed the 7:15 bus
i know better now
and roll over to the
sound of a james brown record
coming from an open window

glass glittering in the street
reflect the faces of
the welfare cases and
the junkies and the pimps
and a faded blue jay
flying through the smog

morning sun breaking through
forcing me to open my eyes
and to admit to myself that i've
lived through another night
and will have to miss another 7:15
whistling lightly a street cleaner
sweeps up the broken glass

By Anonymous

January 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 New Year's Day	2	3 "I Am Here" Registration	4 "I Am Here" Registration	5
		Kwanzaa Ends				
6	7 Classes begin LSCC- Three Kings Celebration 10:30a (Cabral)	8	9 AAI- MLK Convocation 11:45a (Blackman)	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 LSCC- Conciner Con Gusto 12p (Cabral)	19 NASO- 3 rd Annual Comedy Show 7:30p (CSC Ballroom)
20	21 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday (no classes)	22	23	24	25	26 COL-So You Think You Can Dance 6p (CSC Ballroom)
27	28	29	30	31		





February 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3	4	5 National Day (Public Holiday)	6 COL (Public Holiday)	7	8	9
10	11 NA IO (Public Holiday)	12 NASO AAI (Public Holiday)	13 NASO (Public Holiday)	14 NASO LSCC (Public Holiday)	15 NASO (Public Holiday)	16 NA IO (Public Holiday)
17	18 President's Day (Public Holiday)	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26 AAI (Public Holiday)	27	28 LSCC AAI (Public Holiday)	29	

